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Hector A. Stuart.

NAT ZOAN;

A ROMANCE OF BORNEO.

BY

HECTOR A. STUART.

"*CALIBAN.*"

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"I loved her; love will find its way
Through paths that wolves would fear to prey;
And if it does enough, 'twere hard
If passion met not some reward."

BYRON.

SAN FRANCISCO:
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TO

JOHN BIDWELL

OF CHICO,

A PIONEER OF CALIFORNIA,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

OF THE
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OF CALIFORNIA

JOHN BIDWELL.

INSCRIBED TO THE PIONEERS OF CALIFORNIA.

A noble race, decreasing every year,
Are those who formed the pillars of our State;
Who did the car of Progress pioneer,
And found a nation destined to be great
Upon this Western shore;
Who hither proudly bore
Chivalric traits, strength, courage, enterprise—
The nerve to venture, faith to sacrifice,
And countless perils dare; alert with hope—
Shunning no toil—all confident to cope
With aught opposing;
Yea, gifts disclosing,
Brilliant in thought and generous of heart—
Pursuing oft the Christian's goodly part.
Such were the Pioneers—
Such BIDWELL still appears:
A shining type of an illustrious band,
The bulwarks once of their adopted land—
Who still respect for actions past command,
And still as monuments admired to-day
Proclaim of virtues Time cannot decay.

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NAT ZOAN.

This is the sequel to "Ben Nebo," being the closing adventures of that wandering mariner. The scene is laid on the coast of Borneo and adjacent seas. The sketches of manners, customs, scenery, etc., are strictly correct, no poetic embellishment being employed.

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CANTO I.

Oh, could I climb sky-reaching Pisgah's hight
  And view like Israel's chief the landscape o'er,
Not all the perils spread before my sight—
  The Anak race, or Jordan's stormy roar,
  Should turn me from the keenly wished-for shore.
So, could I now the fire of youth regain,
  And nerved with courage distant scenes explore
As in times past, I'd thread the tropic main ;
Nor all its terrors should my wandering steps restrain.

But Fate forbids ; here, anchored like a wreck
  Upon a ledge-bound coast, I drooping lie ;
Relentless doomed no more to tread the deck,
  Or hear the sea-winds shrilly whistle by—
  The surges' moan, the sea-gulls' boding cry.
No more to join the chase—or list again
  The voice of conflict, when, with ardor high,
Brave spirits strive Fame's bubble to attain,
Or boldly fall beneath the nitrous hurricane.

So Fate ordains ; yet Fancy oft careers
And wakes anew her weirdly vivid themes ;
The vanished past again renewed appears,
And shapes, long mouldered into ghostly dreams,
Vivific rise, warmed by her cheering beams.
Fired by her power, I wing a sea-ward flight
To where the vertic Orb untempered gleams ;
There tune the sea-born harp, long hid in night,
And sing the toils of love—the glorious battle plight !

NAT ZOAN.

1

I hear a mystic voice around me breathe,
As if a spirit whispered in the breeze,
Whose breath scarce stirs this swaying palm, beneath
Whose rustling fronds I rest in dreamy ease,
Near the blue marge of Austral's placid seas.
It is the voice of years, that long asleep,
Now wakes again its plaintive melodies;
Wild, warbling, all from dark, oblivion's deep—
They bid my pensive soul in sad remembrance weep.

2

Oh, elfin tones! and must ye still arise
From the dark vale of years forever fled?
Still must I list your never-ceasing sighs,
Like ghostly mourners wailing o'er the dead,
Dirging the mournful past to shadow sped?
Methought that Time, which changes all, had cast
On you his grave-like pall—on you had shed
His deeply shading spell—and girded fast,
Beyond the reach of thought, ye slept entombed at last.

3

But there are things which Time cannot destroy,
Though in his boundless urn they mouldering lie—
Deep-hidden things, mayhap alight with joy,
Or darker toned, awake a heartfelt sigh,
As, draped in shade, they pass like spectres by.
So hath the past to all more gloom than light,
And clouds o'ercast the fairest shining sky ;
Yea, life to some is but one endless night,
As every dragging hour bears sorrow in its flight.

4

And such was he whose ventures now I sing—
The bold sea-rover of the Southern Main,
Of whom in days agone I tuned the string,
And sang in measured tones the nautic strain.
Nat Zoan and his deeds I chant again,
As o'er the restless wave, by Fate impelled,
He dares anew his wayward course maintain ;
Him by the talisman of anguish spelled,
Have we a mournful, hopeless, wandering man beheld.

5

And him in moody thought we left imbound,
A lonely outcast on the Pirate Isle,
While tempest gales resounded hoarsely round
The crumbling turrets of the ruined pile,
And him to sadder musings did beguile ;
Yet as his mind in dismal tumults wrought,
The hand of God was near him all the while,
And with great mercy and great ardor fraught,
Him, deep-desponding man, to blissful safety brought.

6

'Tis midnight : and the storm by slow degrees
In murmurs sinks along the craggy shore ;
Less rudely swell the tempest-beaten seas,
And in decreasing gusts the whirlwinds roar.
When, hark ! a hollow boom rolls slowly o'er
The boisterous sea, and shakes the air around,
As if a gun discharged its nitrous store
From some ill-fated ship by perils bound,
And roused Nat Zoan from his gloomy trance profound.

7

A minute past : again the alarum falls,
And thrills the sailor with a weird surprise.
A signal gun—for aid it loudly calls—
For aid which one sagacious man supplies.
Down to the beach Nat Zoan nimbly flies,
And lo, upon the coral reef, where he
Was ruthless cast, a fated vessel lies
At the rude mercy of the raging sea,
While oft her people's cries resounded dismally.

8

Those cries Nat Zoan heard in keen distress,
And fain would aid the death-environed crew,
Yet little thought that in his loneliness
He more than their unhappy fate could rue ;
Albeit from the ruined tower he drew
A Leila, (1) long in peaceful age grown old,
But still for service fit. From this he threw
A massive link, within whose iron fold
A sounding-cord, well bent, its airy flight controlled.

(1) See note.

9

The charge disparts—the ponderous missive rings,
And with a lightning whirl the air divides ;
Well-aimed it shoots—beyond the vessel springs,
And o'er her waist the uncoiling cordage glides,
Despite the seas which lash her riven sides.
Soon as it falls the junkmen rush amain,
And seize it as across the rail it slides ;
A hawser to it bend—fit to sustain
Themselves above the surge while they the land regain.

10

The hawser landed ; thence around a tree
The end in many a sturdy warp is wound ;
Then, to convey the shipwreckt company,
A wooden heart is to the hawser bound—
Ingenious thought ! which Fate with triumph crowned.
Fixed on this traveller, the crew in fours
Were hauled ashore—save three, who slipping, found
A grave upon these rude, sea-beaten shores,
Where, o'er the coral-ledge, the hoarse-tongued breaker roars.

11

Save these, all on the beach were grouped as dawn
Looked through the cloud-rifts of the leaden sky ;
A haggard crew, by the bleak tempest shorn
Of all they owned, save what might haply lie
Upon the sea-lashed marge, upcast so high
As to escape the greedy waves, that still
Tumultuous wrought, as if they would defy
Fate's law supreme, and loose the rock-ribbed hill—
While round the caverned shore the blasts vibrated shrill.

12

They were a curious race, these castaways ;
From Chuzan they as South Sea traders sailed,
Nor ill encountered, till amid a haze,
Which long upon the restless seas prevailed,
Their junk a Prahu (2) suddenly assailed.
They boldly fought, but as it hapt in vain,
'Till night in shade the struggling crews envailed ;
Then by a breeze which favored, o'er the main
Far from their plunderous foe they safety sought to gain.

(2) See note.

13

Three days they scud, when from the lookout rang
At midnight's hour, the startling cry of Land !
Dismayed they heard—on deck immediate sprang,
And the surrounding waste in horror scanned.
Sad was the prospect—almost them unmanned,
For dangers loomed where'er their gaze explored ;
Tremendous crags rose frowning on each hand,
And quicksands yawned with death insiduous stored,
While surges o'er their ship in mighty cascades poured.

14

In frantic haste the anchor they let go,
And for a while rode safely on the main ;
But every hour the winds increasing blow,
And rising surges tauter stretch'd the chain,
'Till snapt at last it rent beneath the strain ;
Then helpless drove the shattered junk ashore,
Nor hope of life her seamen entertain ;
Yet—last appeal—they bid the cannon roar,
And aid, if aid there be, in hollow tones implore.

15

Those tones Nat Zoan from his dreams awoke,
And him unto the beach in wonder brought,
Where, though the waves in lawless anger broke,
And seemed with more than wonted horrors fraught,
His ready mind, in scenes of trial taught
No hope to banish and no toil forego,
When helpless souls the boon of succor sought,
Did with inventive skill fit aid bestow—
Relieved the hapless crew from their despairing woe.

16

Him, when in safety on the beach they stood,
Their chief Hocampi, a Labuan famed
For deeds of valor, and whose sullen mood
No genial warmth, no tender kindness tamed,
But haughty alway, soon with ire inflamed—
Unto Nat Zoan came and did present
A jewelled Kris, (3) which once as master claimed
That mighty soldier, who on power intent,
As Sha Jehan all Ind unto his sceptre bent.

(3) See note.

17

It was a Kris of wond'rous make and fame,
With which great sultans, thirsting for renown,
Rose to magnificence or sank to shame.
Upon the hilt there gleamed a golden crown,
And in a dazzling line the blade adown
A mystic text from the Alcoran wrought,
In Yemen's tongue, did, charged with evil frown
And vengeance launched 'gainst him who malice fraught
In guile or battle-broil, its master's life-blood sought.

18

The edge was like unto a razor keen,
Of tempered steel, by cunning workmen wrought,
Equal the blade to the best Damascene
That e'er against Saladin's foemen fought,
Or to the dust crusading champions brought ;
And on the scabbard, carved in arabesque,
Were silver figures of unearthly sort,
Inlaid with pearls, devised with skill grotesque,
Or formed with magic art in mazes picturesque.

19

This gallant weapon did Hocampi yield
To the bold sailor for his conduct brave,
Without which his and his men's fates were sealed
And all ere this engulfed beneath the wave,
Now rumbling o'er their comrades' coral grave.
The splendid gift Nat Zoan well-pleased took,
And in return a cordial welcome gave ;
Yet could his spirit ill the donor brook,
Or bide his murderous eye, his crafty underlook.

20

Yet, despite these, he bade the Labuan bring
His swarthy troop into the pirate tower,
Where he so long enthroned—a lonely king—
Had ruled the Isle with none to thwart his power.
His wish obeyed ; there, hungered, they devour
Delicious fruits of many natured taste ;
Then in convivial joys beguile the hour,
While palmy wine their nerves inspiring braced,
And sense of life secure, all present ills effaced.

21

But still their thoughts upon the future dwelt,
And wove in secret many a varied plan
By which they hoped, if Fate propitious dealt,
To leave the islet—'scape the girding ban
Which here inclosed them since they chanced to scan
Its rock-girt shores ; but every project failed,
Till one Ki Lang, an old, experienced man,
Who on the junk as tiller-man had sailed,
Bade them a pinnace build, and over all prevailed.

22

By Ki Lang led, they to the forest went,
And there a craft to build with ardor fell ;
Four weary months, upon the work intent,
They tireless wrought, until at length the shell
Into a pinnace rose. This, launching well,
Swam like a gull upon the sea-green tide ;
And now their grief they did with hope dispel—
To leave the island joyfully decide,
And soon across the wave their little vessel guide.

23

Once more afloat, the roving men pursue
Their wonted course across the heaving main,
Rejoiced to bid the desert isle adieu
And feel the freedom of the seas again,
Free as the winds that own no curbing rein.
Southeast they stretch toward Borneo's sultry shores—
Those sultry shores to many a crew the bane,
Where death-engendering mist insiduous soars,
And Dyak, plunder-bent, the stranded bark explores.

24

Again at large, Nat Zoan wandering drifts
Like a sad waif upon the cheerless deep,
While as he floats the fateful curtain lifts,
And direful scenes in black procession sweep;
But him in safety still the angels keep,
Obedient to that Power which all obey.
So through the night, whilst we are lockt in sleep,
The holy spirits near our pillows stay
And watch, while we inert—while we defenceless lay.

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25

Oh, blessed spirits, by a Sovereign kind
Sent from your beauteous homes to mortals base
To guard the world, while we in sleep reclined
Feel not the presence of your sacred race;
Oh, lovely angels! how endowed with grace
Are ye to shield so vile a thing as man—
To quit your shining thrones and o'er him place
Your saintly guarding forms. Oh, wondrous plan!
Mete attribute of Him who all with love doth scan.

26

But while the sailor held his devious way,
The shade of sadness Memory o'er him shed,
And oft a voice in whispers seemed to say
That in the future, ever charged with dread,
Affliction marked the path he was to thread;
A still small voice, as that Elijah heard
When he an outcast unto Horeb fled,
When 'gainst the Lord the peevish man demurred,
Till taught by wondrous works how wofully he erred.

27

A voice like that which smote the Tishbite's soul
Unto Nat Zoan oft presaging spoke ;
And oft in visions spectres round him stole,
And nameless terrors in his bosom woke,
As from their lips portentous warnings broke,
And him they counselled in prophetic tones
His present aimless journey to revoke ;
But he, persistent, only deeply groans,
And his predestined fate in keenest grief bemoans.

28

So must he on : the ill-starred lot was cast,
And he in vain the issue may rebate ;
Still must he on, though perils rise to ghast,
And various sorrows on his spirit wait.
No rest has man in this terrestrious state ;
On he must drive—to peace or pause unknown—
Till in the tomb he end his troubled fate,
Or high or low alike in sorrow groan ;
Beggar and king alike the equal worm must own.

29

Death levels all ; he pulls the tyrant down
And casts his ashes to the idle wind,
Mingling with those of the unlettered clown,
Who seemed in life scarce as a serf designed,
Or fit the despot's latchets to unbind.
Death levels all ; and when beneath his scythe
All in one sepulchre decay inclined,
Fates be reversed : the clown in regions blithe
Perpetual joys may taste—in pangs the tyrant writhe.

30

But all alike a resting place can claim
In earth's cold bosom, as their meed at last ;
And since to all the end is here the same,
What matters it how low our lot be cast,
Or how exalted on Fame's lofty mast
We stand, the beacon of admiring eyes ?
Soon as we fall, like some gay fancy past,
Forgotten we shall sink, while others rise
To fill our posts and seek the ever-fleeting prize.

31

All ends in naught ; Time bears us all away,
And blots our actions in eternal gloom ;
Great men who flourished yesterday, to-day
Corroding lie forgotten in the tomb,
Nor leave a gap—for instantly their room
Is filled by an aspiring, struggling race.
Ay, even bards must own the cankering doom,
And mingle in the dust with creatures base,
Though years all vainful strive their glories to efface.

32

Still the cerulean waves the pinnace cleaves,
While countless isles her veering course surround,
And as Manoa's reef she sternward leaves,
A lonely peak with golden vapors crowned
Lifts its tall head amid the blue profound.
With joy the wanderers hail that goodly hight,
Since it the tedious voyage's end doth bound ;—
So Christian, worn with his unceasing fight,
Saw Beulah's smiling hills auspicious greet his sight.

33

Still on the pinnace flies ; the sunbeams fade,
And azure mists across the waters creep ;
Still rising high, in darker hues arrayed,
That lonely peak emerges from the deep ;—
Keeney Ballu (4), ~~forever~~ doomed to keep
Unending wardship o'er the glimmering land,
Where as the winds at midnight wildly sweep,
The Dyak dead arise—a ghostly band—
And on its mighty brow in shivering terror stand.

34

Yet while the wanderers hailed the lofty cone,
Beneath whose shadow lay their destined goal,
Nat Zoan's spirits owned a graver tone,
And still those secret voices weirdly stole
In boding tones upon his pensive soul ;
He from his comrades sadly turned away,
With his dark thoughts in silence to condole,
And musing by the fading evening ray,
His dismal fancy did through scenes distressful stray.

(4) See note.

35

But as he mused, the breakers' hollow roar
In deeper murmurs from the island swelled,
As currents urged the pinnace toward the shore,
By no tenacious wind or anchor held;
But as she drives, by dread of wreck impelled,
Her crew, alert, cast out the rattling chain;
By this against the billowy force withheld,
She anchored swings, till o'er the eastern main
Uprising Dawn alights her rosy torch again.

36

"Unmoor!" Hocampi cries; his comrades all
The windlass mann, and from its oozy bed
The grimy anchor to the catheads haul;
Then to the winds the matty sails they spread,
And trim their course by Sipang's distant head.
Fair blow the winds—the land ere noon they gain,
And Sarawak's meandering waters thread,—
With laboring oars the inland voyage maintain,
Till they in Kuchin moor, far from the stormy main.

37

Here moored they pause ; the weary voyage was o'er—
The wished-for port they now at ease survey ;
Here Hossein lived, whose ruthless power before
A servile race in deep abasement lay,
And him as master tremblingly obey.
Here he, uncurbed, his cruel sceptre sways,
And marks with death the closing of each day,
Yet not one vassal dare against him raise
The regicidal hand, and end the monster's days.

38

Tyrant's should die ; not by the gradual lapse
Of passing time, which all of earth decays—
But by the quicker stroke, that nerved perhaps
By selfish vengeance, on the despot preys,
And from the world a public curse conveys.
What is the man who calls himself a king,
That he with awe a nation should amaze,
When like an offal one bold hand could fling
Him to the loathsome worm—a foul, corrupting thing ?

39

And sooth 'tis strange that thousands of brave men
Will to one being stoop in abject fear—
Will shake like aspens at his very ken,
And to his words as oracles give ear,
Fearful lest they their own death-vollies hear ;
Ay, more—will passive stand, when at his frown
A host of victims find a gory bier,
All knockt like oxen unresisting down,
Without one manly blow their dying throes to crown !

40

Withal at intervals a hero springs
From the down-trodden multitude among,
Whose daring soul with generous ardor rings,
To deadly hate by deep oppression stung ;
He like a wolf hath on the tyrant sprung,
And at a blow avenged a groaning race :
Oh, glorious man ! whose fame with deathless tongue
Should ages sing—who in his pride of place
Smites down the king as he would smite the helot base.

41

Oh, for a hate such as Damiens (5) bore—
  Such as Chastel (6) with endless glory crowned—
That here upon this despot-ridden shore
  A glorious regicide might now be found
  To strike the oppressor with a fatal wound.
One will like theirs would liberate a land
  Long in the coils of chains tyrannic bound—
Its power, its wealth, its glory all expand,
And hurl from life a fiend whose rage none can withstand.

42

Nat Zoan lands: the haughty raja seeks,
  In council seated midst a glittering band;
But smooth this day his humor, soft he speaks,
  And bids the sailor welcome to his land—
  Desiring him anon to take command
Of a fleet prahu as a pirate built,
  Which oft on many a circumjacent strand
Had human gore in battle's ordeal spilt;
Shuddering the sailor hears, loathing such fearful guilt.

(5) (6) See note.

43

The raja scowled ; his falcon eye discerned
The tumult struggling in Nat Zoan's breast ;
At once to wrath his joyous humor turned,
Which scarce awhile his reason could arrest,
While sternly he the wavering man addrest,
And charged him ere the morrow's solar ray
Had veiled its brightness in the dusky west,
Decision give : and should he answer nay,
Low in the dust at once his stripling form should lay.

44

The sailor heard : in anxious haste withdrew,
And rest again upon the pinnace found,
Where still a fragment of the shipwreckt crew
Upon the deck in rest enervate bound,
By matty awnings shaded, dozed around.
Here too, Hocampi, the Labuan brave,
Like his tired comrades lay in sleep profound—
But roused, Nat Zoan calmly to him gave
The story of his visit to the raja grave.

45

Hocampi heard : that evil-minded man
Would fain the Christian to perdition draw ;
Him thus advised, ere day its circuit ran
To shun by flight the chieftain's ruthless law ;
(In this his fatal doom the fiend foresaw,)
For he did hate in wild, fanatic zeal,
As mete in Moslem with all creeds at war,
Whoso did not an equal faith reveal,
Or scorned the turbaned Seer, whose law hath no appeal.(7)

46

Well-pleased, Nat Zoan heard the Labuan's speech,
As he the raja's offer loathed to take—
And vowed that ere the flaming orb should reach
The western rim, he would the isle forsake,
Or sink at sea or perish in the brake.
So, head-strong bent, all reason urged was vain—
Though life itself he boldly placed at stake—
And as night darkened o'er the palm-girt plain
A Tanka boatman bore him to the open main.

(7) See note.

47

But when as Dawn upreared his lurid crown
And flushed the curling seas with crimson light—
When from his cloudy throne Sipang lookt down
On that lone boat, which through the lingering night
With steady course pursued its seaward flight—
Far up the stream, near a projecting bend,
A fleet of war-junks slowly heave in sight;
Toward the retreating skiff their prows extend,
And from their bow-guns oft a random shot they send.

48

"Pursued!" Nat Zoan cries; "the curst Malay
Has to his chief made my defection known—
Has led his hirelings on my life to prey,
And every hope of freedom overthrown.
May Allah curse him! May my spirit groan
In fires Satanic, feeling endless pain,
If the dog 'scape me, though I stand alone
And with this single kris the strife maintain;
If he but fall, my blood shall not be shed in vain."

49

With gleaming sword all naked to the hilt,
He like some beast enraged in fury stood,
As roused to frenzy by the blood it spilt,
Still longed to join again the gory feud
And in fierce battle quench its fiery mood.
While thus at bay, the boatman spreads the sails
And toward a sheltering cape his course pursued,
While rising blow the winds—the chase prevails,
And oft a threatening shot along the billow wails.

50

Nat Zoan saw, and for the event prepared—
Though oft he scanned the looming headland o'er,
Which could he reach, by seas upsurging spared,
A refuge he might find upon its shore
From the swart crew he scudded now before.
But as he gazed upon the snowy line
Of surf that fiercely 'gainst the ledges bore,
He every hope of safety did resign—
Resolved upon the deep to meet his foes condign.

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51

But as he stood, uncertain how to act,
A leila on the foremost chaser roared ;
The fragile mast, in splinters rudely hackt,
Fell with its sail in ruin overboard—
And as it fell a second salvo poured
From the bow-chaser of another junk.
The Tanka-man, sore wounded, aid implored,
And weltering in his gore, in terror shrunk,
While down the yesty waves the barge slow-settling sunk.

52

But still Nat Zoan all-defiant stood,
And nerved with hate prepared to meet his foes ;
Ay, fearless stood, though welled the briny flood
Through countless leaks no present skill could close—
More deadly they than his assailants' blows ;
But daring all his kris aloft he waves,
For at oar's length the first pursuer rose—
Yet the dread issue Fate opposing staves,
And him from seeming death with gracious mercy saves.

53

A surging billow breaks against the wreck,
And o'er it casts a foaming sheet of spray,
In which at random urged, a floating speck,
Drifts a lone waif upon the watery way—
All that the searching eye may now survey
Of the lost boat, which thus so sudden found
A tomb amid the deep, unsheltered bay ;
Nor it alone—its fated owner drowned,
Among its ruins slept upon the ocean-ground.

54

Nat Zoan rose—he like a cork could swim—
And bouyant floated on the heaving main,
While the exultant foes surrounding him
Made all his efforts at resistance vain ;
Though still his kris, girt by its silver chain,
To his wrist hung, despite the breaking surge—
But useless now, it might as well have lain
On the tall mount that edged the eastern verge,
For he, exhausted quite, no more the brand could urge.

55

Him to the foremost junk the Dyaks drew,
And firmly on the deck with fetters bound ;
To Kuchin then their homeward course pursue,
Exulting that success the venture crowned.
And when at length their mooring place they found,
The luckless captive far inland they bore—
The glebe to delve and toil in ceaseless round,
As Hossein's bounden servant evermore—
A friendless outcast on this isolated shore.

56

It was a lovely spot where he, immured,
His arduous task each circling day pursued—
A vernal plain by pathless woods secured,
With gorgeous flowers and tufted grasses strewed ;
Where stately palms the spicy breezes wooed,
And o'er the mead continual tributes flung.
A beauteous place, where hearts with grief endued
Might comfort find the soothing scenes among—
Such scenes hath Persia's bard in strains immortal sung.

57

O'er all there breathed a dream of hallowed ease,
Unbroken save by drone of purling rills,
Or chirp of bird, or hum of flitting bees,
Or slaves vociferous on the palm-crowned hills,
Or campanero's voice with silvery trills,
Sweet-warbling from the groves' dark solitude—
Or that mysterious sound the ear enthrills
When Nature broods, in slumber's spell imbued,
And seems each mystic pause with spirit tones endued.

58

Each scene to pensive languishment inclined,
And lulled each sense in sweetly-soothing rest—
A witching music trilled upon the wind,
And on the soul a tender shade imprest.
A spot in sooth it was by nature blest—
Here man the joys of Aden might foretaste
Were he with no corrosive guile distrest,
And of those godlike attributes defaced,
Which in a sinless age the first of mortals graced.

59

But Sin here spread its ever-blighting shade,
And filled the goodly scene with endless woe—
The captives' sighs these cloudless skies invade,
And o'er these meads the tears of sorrow flow ;
These palms full many a tale of anguish know—
Oft have they seen the victim doomed to bleed,
The toiler writhe beneath the master's blow—
By piecemeal die to swell a tyrant's greed,
And with his closing breath for mercy vainly plead.

60

Yet in this lovely, calm, secluded haunt
A fairy being in seclusion dwelt
From crowds aloof ; nor voice had she to vaunt
Her glowing charms ; nor yet her bosom felt
Those tender pangs that hearts of maidens melt.
A child of nature, still untoucht by love,
Her guileless mind with themes ethereal dealt—
Pure as the skies that brightly shone above,
Sweet as the dreams that soothe the breast of turtle-dove.

61

And such Oloa—Hossein's favored child—
Whom he with jealous care had here concealed,
A sweet exotic in the woodland wild.
Here, like the flowers that bloomed upon the field,
To Nature's eye alone her charms revealed—
Charms which with those of Aden's nymphs might vie,
And soon ordained a mighty power to wield ;
At soft affection's shrine an offering lie,
And mix with wildering joy the soul-depressing sigh.

62

Love o'er all hearts his tender influence flings,
And tempers them in an enduring fire ;
Beggars his power confess, as well as kings—
But fellest he to those who strike the lyre,
Whose souls sublimed with an emotion higher
Than such as doth the lower race infuse,
Love with a loftier, warmer, fixed desire
Than those whose souls a coarser vein imbues,
And scape the shafts that gall the children of the muse.

63

By love impelled, melodious Orpheus led
His wandering steps to Pluto's gloomy shore—
There sought his bride among the ghostful dead,
And from his harp, which minstrel-like he bore,
Bade mournful strains the darkened vault explore.
Those mournful strains the ghosts in sorrow bound,
Touched by a music never heard before,
Like the grim tyrant saddened at each sound,
In dumb amazement shook at anguish so profound.

64

Musæus too, who on the Athenian strand
The Queen of Night a glorious tribute laid—
Smote his resounding lyre with nervous hand
And hymned the praises of the Theban maid,
Whose glance his heart in deepest grief arrayed.
Sadly his passion sang ; his tones prevail—
With equal grief the maiden's heart invade ;
Pensive, she bids him hush the plaintive tale,
And from her gentle love celestial brightness hail.

65

Love, Tasso's heart with withering fire consumed,
And marked his days with unavailing tears ;
Petraca's sun to cheerless shadow doomed,
And dimmed the lustre of Camoen's years.
To minstrel souls the god a curse appears ;
Ay, that majestic bard, by Heaven sent,
Whose genius like a meteor still careers—
E'en Byron's haughty soul in anguish bent,
By Love's resistless will with countless horrors shent.

66

Yes, all have loved ; nor scathless pass the fair,
Though softer fires their gentler natures feel :
Those burning throes which sterner beings share,
Through their soft breasts in smoother currents steal,
And in their hearts to mild respect congeal.
Unlike the hardier race whom passion sways,
Love rarely woe to them can bring, or weal ;
Rarely their souls to joy ecstatic raise,
Or plunged in funeral grief o'ercast their sunless days.

67

Yet some there are of womankind, who love
With all the ardor of impassioned souls—
Who lift the chosen idol far above
All that this sublunary state controls,
And as the globe on ceaseless axle rolls,
So their affection never has an end.
Each as a god the cherished one extols,
And to his will submissively doth bend—
Or hazard death if him she can from ill defend.

68

And chief among this winsome sisterhood
The raja's daughter, fair Oloa, reigned ;
Since first her star-like eyes Nat Zoan viewed,
Had love her soul in mystic influence chained
And all her thoughts in one direction trained.
'Twas one calm eve, when by the glimmering light
He homeward toiled, with arduous labor pained,
That she beneath a cassia, hid from sight,
First saw the pensive man and rued his hapless plight.

69

And then it chanced that as she gazed on him,
A lengthened hiss vibrated near her side ;
Shrieking she turned, and from the covert dim
A mighty serpent saw meandering glide,
With head erect and jaws extended wide—
While flashed his eyes of deep vermillion red,
And fierce his glance as the fair prey he eyed—
That glance which held her fast in spell-bound dread,
Till statue-like she stood, all sense of feeling fled.

70

In horror dazed, nailed to the spot she stood
Beneath the spell of those mesmeric eyes—
For these huge monsters of the python brood
Are armed with powers that vainly man defies,
Which yield him oft a helpless sacrifice ;
On whom soe'er they fix their baneful glance,
Less help besteads, a willing victim dies :
Their gaze, magnetic, every sense enchants—
Dispels all fear, and lulls the soul in dream-like trance.

71

But from the maid one piercing cry arose,
And roused Nat Zoan from his reverie ;
With agile bound unto her aid he goes,
And boldly dares the hideous enemy—
Her bent to save, whate'er his fate might be.
Then from his belt a Sum-pi-tan (8) he drew,
And trained the reed with skillful energy—
Applied his lip, then toward the serpent flew,
And from his lusty lungs a breath tremendous blew.

72

Sure was his aim—outsped the subtle dart,
Whose barb the dew of deathful ipo stained ;
Fateful it sped, and smote in vital part
The fearful monster, and his rage restrained—
Numbed with the venomed death the shaft contained ;
No longer gliding o'er the crackling brake
His rapid course the serpent huge maintained,
But prone at length his coils spasmodic shake,
And frantic throes the woods' resounding echoes wake.

(8) See note.

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73

Ere long the deadly venom through his veins
Corrosive swept upon its errand dire,
And whilst he raged in death's convulsive pains,
Sudden he gaspt, and quivering did expire.
So falls the palm when struck by lightning-fire—
So on the sward its ponderous length is laid,
Ne'er more to rise, with vernal life aspire
And tower the lofty monarch of the shade,
But low it sinks in dust, as all of earth must fade.

74

Meanwhile Nat Zoan, freed from evil strife—
The python numb—gazed on the beauteous maid,
Who still enchanted, caring naught for life,
A frozen image near the monster stayed,
Hard by a spring, beneath a plane-tree's shade;
And soon her steadfast glance the sailor's gaze
Drew from the serpent, now quiescent laid.
O'er her sweet charms his eye delighted strays,
And moth-like o'er each starry orb all fluttering plays.

75

While thus he gazed upon her lovely face
A tender interest kindled in his breast,
For heavenly beauty had with magic grace
Its signet on each rounded line imprest,
And with attractive power the maiden blest.
Then, as her eyes with jasper light imbued,
On his with mingled awe and joy did rest,
He felt his soul awake—half-crazed he viewed,
And deemed to Aden turned the tangled solitude.

76

As bronze engilded by the setting sun,
Her skin gave forth a mystic shining light—
A lustre known but to these people dun,
Where wheels the Disk his equatorial flight,
Glazing to gold or shading into night.
Strange was her hue, yet wondrous to behold—
Her beauty matchless, ravishing the sight,
Nor fairer shell did lovelier soul infold,
For cast she truly seemed in nature's perfect mould.

77

And dark her eyes as hyperborean shade
When midnight drops her deepest curtain down—
A tone intense, with phosphor beams inlaid,
Akin to those which on eve's dusky crown
In glittering radiance flash. Of ebon brown
Her locks elf-like in festoons swept the ground
In wanton richness, seeming bent to drown
Her sylphine form, so thick they clustered round ;
Yet chief of all her charms, her eyes did most astound.

78

There is a wondrous strength in woman's eye—
A strength which man, alas ! cannot withstand
When Love's electric glances from it fly,
Like bolts dismissed by an immortal hand,
Black ruin casting where e'er they expand.
The softest glance the sternest bosom thrills
With tumults Reason vainly can withstand ;
New hopes, new thoughts, new joys, new griefs instills,
And man with heavenly bliss or hellish sorrow fills.

79

But most in eyes of raven-colored hue
Exists this subtle power, this mystic spell—
As if from them a spirit-shape lookt through
And bound the gazer's soul invincible.
In this all other colors they excel ;
All other shades a will less potent own—
Grey orbs mayhap of minds sagacious tell,
The azure-hued are scarce with passion flown,
Cold are the hazel-eyed as monumental stone.

80

But ebon orbs with torrid passion glow—
The windows they whence deep affection shines,
Which steadfast burns whatever tempests blow,
And to one object steadily inclines ;
Round the loved idol as the ivy twines
The solid oak, enwreaths with changeless fold,
Nor but when chilled in secret grief repines.
Such love, alas ! not often we behold,
Yet such there was in one my harp hath oft extolled.

81

One whose sea-urn is now my only shrine,
Where all I worship rests in endless gloom,
Forgotten save by this lone heart of mine,
That sighs its sad oblations o'er her tomb—
And so will sigh, till hushed in equal doom
It sinks in earth, unsignalled and unknown—
Another atom vanished to make room
For some new pilgrim, haply doomed to groan,
And for the boon of life with constant pangs atone.

82

Oloa's eyes upon Nat Zoan glanced,—
Those star-like eyes, where glowing passion beamed,
With hectic pangs his heaving bosom lanced,
Till in delirium lost his spirit seemed
Some heavenly vision to have sweetly dreamed.
Such Love's effect when Beauty's radiant grace
Hath on a mortal like an angel gleamed ;
Nor time nor turmoil can its stamp erase—
It haunts his dragging hours till death his pangs efface.

83

Nat Zoan spoke : his voice like music fell
In silvery accents on the maiden's ear,
As he confest the soul-bewildering spell
Her beauties—now, alas ! to him so dear—
Had on his senses cast. But she in fear
(For fear doth oft the virgin's passion show)
Begged him be mute—yet strangely hovered near,
And coyly heard his words in murmurs flow,
Or, downward gazing, oft a sigh resounded low.

84

But as she plead a shout re-echoed round,
And lo, among the palms a gaudy train
Of courtiers press. With hasty steps they bound
Across the sward, while Hossein first to gain
The eventful spot, with frenzied joy amain
His daughter folds to his paternal breast.
Him had a slave, who overtasked had lain
Fatigued beneath a palm, set out to quest,
And shivering to his lord the hideous tale addrest.

85

With the warm impulse of unsullied love
Aged Hossein fiercely clasped his much-loved child,
And gazing on the azure vault above,
To Allah poured his gratulations wild ;
His prayers done, he on Nat Zoan smiled,
And pressed his hand in friendship's fervid zeal :
Bemoaned his lot—from his own land exiled,
And forced the crushing weight of toil to feel
Beneath unclouded skies, where suns malignant wheel.

86

" Brave man," said he, " thou hast our daughter saved,
And in return full liberty is thine ;
Thy gallant act, too, on our archives graved,
Shall to remotest time illustrious shine ;
Nor this alone : we furthermore design
To show the goodness of our royal will,
And our best prahu shall to thee resign,
To own thy rule and thy unequalled skill—
Where e'er thou wouldst shalt roam, and thy behests fulfill."

87

Nat Zoan heard : in courteous tones replied,
Wistful the tyrant's mandate to evade—
"Almighty chief, whom Allah ever guide,
Thou hast in sooth a goodly offer made,
And by this act the service done repaid ;
Yet ere my course I can decide aright—
Though in all things thy will should be obeyed—
Yet grant a respite till the morrow's night
Ere I thy boon receive, oh man of boundless might."

88

"Thou hast it, or forsooth a longer time,
And shall the while within our palace dwell,
Of all our noble guests the acknowledged prime—
Whose name likewise the trump of Fame shall swell,
Thou the brave Jower (9) of power invincible !
Away bold man ! Hocampi hence shall guide
Thy footsteps through the dark entangled fell
To Kassim's walls, a-nigh the river's side,
There at thy leisure on our offering to decide."

(9) See note.

89

He spoke: imperious waved his jewelled hand,
Then bade his train pursue their onward way,
For now upon the deeply-devious land
Gleamed the last blushes of expiring day,
And dim the path through the dark forest lay.
Yet sad, Oloa turned amid the gloom,
And often paused, as willing still to stay—
As chained to him who from a hideous doom
Herself had saved and bade new joy her life illume.

90

With her she bore a relic of the deed—
The sum-pi-tan from whence the arrow sped
Which did the serpent's forward course impede,
And save her from impending danger dread.
Nat Zoan saw, and in the action read
A language which of tender passion spoke,
And o'er his soul a fair aurora shed;
The mists that round him hung, dispersing broke,
And he to newer life, to brighter dreams awoke.

91

His eyes the witching maid continual sought,
Till the thick jungle hid her from his view;
Then with his sullen guide immerst in thought,
He pushed his tortuous way the forest through,
And as night lowered within the palace drew.
Meanwhile Oloa, in disturbing dreams,
First learned the pangs of earnest love to rue;
Feverish she slept—her sleep with visions teems,
And in each wildering scene Nat Zoan's ~~vision~~ gleams.

CANTO II.

92

Ye lithesome winds that curl the sparkling seas
  Which o'er Ascian's strands resounding creep,
Or hoarsely chant in solemn melodies
  Around the bald and billow-breaking steep ;
  Oh, winds, however high or low ye sweep,
Still of soul-stirring themes responsive sing—
  Still o'er grief-laden love pathetic weep,
As when ye touch the sad æolian string,
Or moan through hollow caves like sea-sprites murmuring.

93

Lo, from her fleecy couch the pensive moon,
  Pale wanderer of the night, arising glows,
And softly from her melancholy lune
  A vagueful light upon the landscape throws,
  While silvery clouds a heavenly crown compose.
Oh ! chaste, pale-visaged ornament of night,
  By whom the main in endless pulses flows,
Who leadest the star-lights in nocturnal flight—
Thee sadly shall I hymn, and hail thy mystic light.

94

How oft have I exultant hailed thy ray,
As o'er the hazy verge it mildly shone—
Beheld thee chase the obscuring shades away
And soften nature with a brighter tone,
Or on the deep descried thy fulgence thrown ;
And as I owned its spirit-soothing power,
Sad memories rose of dreams forever flown—
The gilded fancies of a fleeting hour
Passed like a sunny beam beneath a shadow's glower.

95

Thee have I seen in state majestic rise
Above the ocean, like me desolate—
Or glare terrific from portentous skies,
The lurid harbinger of storms that wait
With gathered powers o'er earth to culminate ;
Or from thy waning face such mildness shed
As scarce the nightly shade to dissipate
Or dim the glittering legions overhead,
Or on the drowsy lake a skein of lustre spread.

96

Oh, amber-visaged queen ! by whose pale ray
The love-sick minstrel strolling oft is heard
To sadly breathe his tuneful roundelay,
Soft as the tone night's sweetly-singing bird,
When by thy pensive light to music stirred,
The echoing wood with harmony awakes ;
Or sighs in sylvan bower the tender word
Which on the virgin's ear in sweetness breaks,
And with electric bliss her heart vibrating shakes.

97

Oft, too, by thy mild beam Nat Zoan wound
His stealthy steps through the entangled glade,
And when, inert, the world lay hushed profound,
He with Oloa love's sweet power obeyed,
And 'neath the shaded groves in secret strayed ;
While from his lips the tones of passion fell—
Those burning tones maids rarely will evade.
Around her heart they wove a magic spell,
And chained her spotless soul in love unchangeable.

98

Meanwhile he to the raja's wish agreed,
And of a gallant prahu took command—
Renowned among the fleet for strength and speed,
And by a bold and plunder-loving band
Of Illanoan rovers ably manned.
This o'er the surge to fiery Celebez
He was to guide—assail the teeming strand,
And from the natives varied treasures seize,
Or stretch for nautic spoils wherever urged the breeze.

99

But while he seemed to all his swarthy crew
Composed and on his ruthless course intent,
His conscience proved his outward mask untrue,
And loathed the purpose to which he was bent.
So doth this keen avenger, ever sent
As the stern monitor of erring man—
Though he may strive its will to circumvent—
Derange, ay, oft destroy some evil plan,
Or crushed unheeded writhe the curse of his life's span.

100

Nat Zoan owned its counsels, yet applied
The usual salve of shallow sophistries
Which man, who would all but himself deride,
Has wrought, the weird rebuking sting to ease,
And drown its ever sounding homilies.
By logic he its throbbings partly stilled,
And nerved with courage all his energies ;
So fate resolved, so fate must be fulfilled :
No man the issue swerves—he moves as he is willed.

101

He reasoned well : there is a ruling power
To whose decrees all in obedience bend ;
And soon Nat Zoan felt the tyrant's glower
Upon his fate in darkling wrath descend.
It was the night on which he did intend
To stretch away, when fiercely from the west,
As drew the sultry day unto an end,
A mighty gale the billowy sea distrest,
And on the ravaged land its ruthless seal imprest.

102

He wakeful heard the elemental rage
At midnight's hour, stretcht on his rushy cot,
And musing on such themes as might engage
One cast in his eventful, dangerous lot;
A sudden thought, seeming from Heaven got,
Urged him to leave this scene of war and woe,
And quiet find in some secluded spot—
Where with his bride he life's full bliss might know,
Nor dread each moment's space the deftly murderous blow.

103

Some islet seek—there in sequestered ease,
Secure from toil, from crafty hate secure,
He might disown the tempest-roaring seas
And all the ills fate bade him now endure;
There, fenced from guilt, of plenty ever sure,
His peaceful years would softly circle round—
Nor grim ambition to destruction lure,
Nor glory tempt with laurels sorrow-crowned,
But simple joys be his, in sweet contentment found.

104

He pondered deeply on this mystic thought
For lingering hours on that tempestuous night,
Veering in doubt, till morn decision brought,
And cheered his spirit with auspicious light.
Then he resolved, though perilous the flight,
Swart Hossein's tyrant service to forsake,
And with Oloa—if all fared aright—
In Sooloo's Isle his secret dwelling make ;
His purpose formed no power its rigid force could shake.

105

The winds are wild—convulsed the murky air,
And stooping clouds in blackened masses scud ;
Red-glancing bolts across the heavens glare,
And rains descend a deluge-pouring flood,
While mighty trees and many a fragile bud
Upon the land in prostrate ruin lie,
Trembling as launching forth in echoing thud,
The thundrous peals vibrate along the sky—
And roars the deep, whose rage the cliffs can scarce defy.

106

On such a night, when horrors bristle round,
With cautious feet Nat Zoan threads the brake,
Nor heeds the tempest's soul-appalling sound,
Nor riven trees that o'er him wildly shake,
Nor lightning flash, nor thundering rolls that wake
The caverned earth and wrench the vaulted skies;
Not these can make his hardy spirit quake,
Which tried in peril, can o'er peril rise,
And from his gallant heart all terror exorcise.

107

Albeit, as he kept his cheerless way
A nameless sadness o'er his spirit lowered,
And a still voice forewarning bade him stay,
Nor hold a path where danger grimly towered;
For should he thus, by passion overpowered,
His present wild and desperate course pursue,
On his devoted head be terrors showered,
And hideous pangs which he would sadly rue—
But he the warning stilled, nor course but onward knew.

108

He reached at length Oloa's lone retreat,
And paused to list if aught his steps betrayed ;
But all was still—though wild the tempest beat,
And scowled the skies in vapors black arrayed,
Save when the lurid fires across them played.
But naught was heard to show his presence known—
No stranger trenched within his ambuscade ;
He stood amid the stormy gloom alone,
Eager to grasp the stake on which his life was thrown.

109

But sudden on his ear there broke a sound
Which shook his spirit with emotion strange,
And him in terror caused to gaze around,
And with more cautious steps the forest range ;
Yet ere his fixed position he could change,
Or draw with rapid hand his trusty blade,
That sound which did his gallant soul derange,
Entombed amid the tempest's murmurs laid—
Yet still upon his mind dark apprehension preyed.

110

But reckless still, his scheme he must pursue—
His fate was sealed were he to hesitate ;
This he too surely, half-repenting, knew—
Foresaw his peril, but foresaw too late,
No will of his his course could now rebate ;
Assured of this, he bowed to the decree
That mortal plans doth sternly regulate—
That overrules the things that are to be,
And whirls man ever on to fore-doomed destiny.

111

Nat Zoan paused ; an oaten pipe he took
From his waist-belt, and three times shrilly blew ;
Scarce died the sounds—his heart expectant shook—
When a small hand the jalousy withdrew,
And a sweet face, half-veiled, gazed coyly through.
"Art thou Oloa?" he in whispers cried,
As toward the opened window-screen he flew ;
A silvery voice unto his words replied,
And on his panting breast the raja's daughter sighed.

112

Oh, blissful hour ! when in communion sweet,
Two kindred souls in love congenial taste
That heavenly joy, for more than mortals mete ;
When for a time, all thought of earth effaced,
The soul seems in celestial realms placed—
On wings ærial floats, while choirs unseen,
With mystic strains as Nature's waking graced,
Rise like sweet incense every look between,
Till joys ecstatic fill the soul-bewildering scene.

113

How blissful they to those whose destinies
Have felt malignant stars upon them gleam—
Whose hearts, o'ercast with sumless miseries,
Make life one long, one sad, one hopeless dream :
Forsaken souls, o'er whom no cheering beam,
No ray of love the lowering gloom dispels—
As on the tide of life's tumultuous stream,
Like shattered wrecks on ocean's troubled swells,
They groaning toss in pangs of self-created hells.

114

Nat Zoan clasped Oloa in his arms,
And from her lips delicious tributes wrung ;
Soothed with soft words her spirits' dark alarms,
And round her trembling form his caftan flung—
Then bade her haste ; she from the window sprung,
And with her lover trod the open glade,
Intent a creek to reach, where anchored hung
A fleet prahu, by whose obedient aid
The sailor had resolved their flight should be essayed.

115

But as the lovers reached the streamlet's marge
A bullet past them from the jungle pealed,
And ere the echoes from the explosive charge
In silence died, a figure stood revealed,
And a hoarse voice bade the bold sailor yield.
Nat Zoan paused, o'ercome with horror dread—
For now his fate seemed past a venture sealed,
Though grimly he resolved to strike till dead,
And doom more than one ghost the shadeful realms to thread.

116

He gazed around : the wood with foemen teemed ;
No hope against such numbers vast to stand—
Yet he must strive ; his kris all naked gleamed,
And 'gainst a towering palm he met the band,
Nerving with vigorous strength his skillful hand.
Then onward rushed, as wolves upon their prey
The yelling horde, whose rage Hocampi fanned
And fiercely hounded to the unequal fray—
But firm the sailor stood and kept them all at bay.

117

Meanwhile Oloa, in oblivion's chain,
Unconscious on the humid sward reclined—
And her to seize the Dyaks strove in vain,
For all who sought, Nat Zoan's blade assigned
To gory graves, as brave men often find.
Then grew the combat hot ; the sailor's kris,
Begrimed with blood, to every point inclined ;
Each lightning stroke dismissed a soul from this
To that unknown abode of mingled pain and bliss.

118

But e'en the boldest efforts of the brave,
O'ermatched, against less gallant souls will fail ;
Repose the long-taxed energies too crave,
Or strength at last o'er courage will prevail.
So our bold sailor, though he scorned to quail,
Yet wearied craved the nervine of repose—
For strokes on strokes upon him rattling hail,
And undiminished throng his tigrish foes,
Till gashed with countless wounds he sank beneath their blows.

119

Then bathed in his own blood he prostrate lay,
Yet struggling madly on the grimy ground—
Resolved to struggle till life's sinking ray
Should in eternal torpor rest profound ;
But when his vision, wildly glancing round,
His stricken love beheld, he sought to press
Her to his bosom, and with frantic bound
Uprising, kissed her lips in fond caress,
But staggering sank again, supine in nothingness.

120

Then from the sward the Dyaks slowly bore
Him, still oblivious, to a neighboring hut,
Raised on a hillock, high the jungle o'er,
And by a lofty stockade closely shut;
Here in a cell, where heads from warriors cut (10)
Poised from the rafters hung, he rudely thrown
On withered fronds, stripped from the cocoanut,
Was left to die, unshriven and alone,
And rackt with grievous ills his frenzied love atone.

121

Here as he lay, Oloa too imbound,
A captive, felt the force of Hossein's ire,
And rued the fate that darkly o'er her frowned—
That doomed her hopes so rudely to expire,
And crowned the hatred of her tyrant sire.
Nat Zoan would she seek, but guards restrained
Her eager feet, and bade her hence retire;
Nor tears, nor wiles, nor bribes their hearts unchained,
But her fast lockt they held, as their grim chief ordained.

(10) See note.

122

Still in the Head-house, closely fettered, lay
Nat Zoan, markt with many a grievous wound—
Gazing with sickened eyes each dragging day
Upon the ghastly trophies swaying round,
Moved by the winds that through the port-holes found
A guardless entrance ; and to him each head
Seemed as it swayed, in flaxen nettings bound,
To hold the spectre of its owner dead,
Mocking his doleful state and threatening horrors dread.

123

He shuddered as he gazed upon them all—
Those gory relics of departed braves,
Whom now no warlike signal could recall
To frenzied strife—a tyrant's willing slaves,
Joying for him to fill blood-boltered graves ;
And musing on them, glimmering in the den,
Foresaw the hour—unless him Allah saves—
When his head too should glut the Dyaks' ken,
Such the unholy law of these fierce-hearted men.

124

Days came and went—he still a captive lay,
While o'er him ever swinging to and fro,
Like restless phantoms in the shadow gray,
His grim companions—senseless now to woe—
Scowled on the suffering mortal chained below.
To him they seemed to revel in his pain,
And grin in hideous joy, as wheeling slow
They showed their shrunken jaws, and scowled as fain
To rise, a grisly band, and join the fight again.

125

He longed for death—for more than death was his—
But longed in vain : not yet the troublous field
He must forsake ; he still must strive in this,
And still awhile Life's cumbrous truncheon wield.
Convinced of this, his heart with strength he steeled,
And sullen lived, his dismal state despite ;
His vigor rose, his wounds all gradual healed,
And oft his spirit winged an upward flight,
And soared to realms of hope, though still involved in night.

LIBRARY OF THE

126

He longed again to plow the boundless seas,
And leave the land and all its ills behind—
To breathe again the spirit-stirring breeze
And sail where'er his wandering soul inclined,
Or stretch for some fair isle where he might find
A refuge from his haunting misery,
Which like a burden seemed by Fate designed
To weigh his spirit down unceasingly—
Till crazed, he yearned from his grief-tortured self to flee.

127

But vain these wishes: dreams illusive all,
Since he must die—so Hossein had decreed;
The Jower who dared his sacred child to thrall
Must by the headsman's kris in public bleed,
And expiate with life so grave a deed.
This day—the day on which the fleet shall sail,
While favoring winds the intended passage speed—
Shall his death-throes the tyrant's sight regale,
And soothe his tiger wrath, though wild his daughter wail.

CANTO III.

128

There is a sound comes to mine ear, as if
A gun was fired upon the distant main,
And sullen echoes pulsing round yon cliff
Told me the tale of tragic love again—
That tale which in oblivion long hath lain.
Roused at the sound, my harp anew I seize,
And tune again the ever-sad refrain
That moved me erst to sing, as Fate decrees,
Of eld-time vivid themes on Borneo's crisp-green seas.

129

'Tis fervid noon : enveiled in molten haze
The tangled forest droops in deep repose—
And ocean hushed, a mirror seems to blaze
Beneath the blinding glare the day-king throws,
And scarce a ripple on its surface flows,
And scarce a sound upon the sea-marge fell—
No longer white with ocean's briny snows,
For Langour weaved o'er all her mystic spell,
Foreboding direful act—hate dark and terrible.

130

On this heat-stricken day Nat Zoan's life
Must end in death its lengthened train of woes,
And his brave soul, freed by the ruthless knife,
Find in some other sphere that blest repose
Which here the earth-bound spirit never knows.
Ay, he must perish—perish in the prime
Of years, when life its brightest aspect shows—
When nerved with courage, with a soul sublime,
He all must now forego—fond love his only crime.

131

Still over all his courage nobly rose,
And steeled his sinews with unflinching pride—
Taught him his features firmly to compose,
Nor show how hard the soul beneath was tried,
But calmly, sternly, the event abide ;
Yet 'twas unreal all—mere vainful show,
Since nature 'gainst the deed lamenting cried—
Foresaw with dread her life departing flow,
Her fires electric cease, her work in dust laid low.

132

Now lost in gloomy dreams the fated man,
Near a huge porthole, bound in fetters lay,
And musing on his fate, his vision ran
Upon the streams that wound their devious way,
Till in the Sarawak they mingled stray ;
Thence farther sent, his gaze to sea extends,
To where the billows on the reeflet play—
And there a prahu to the sea-wind bends,
And toward the sheltering port her foaming pathway wends.

133

He gazed with curious interest on that barge—
So strange an interest that it seemed to him
A bearer of some tidings held in charge,
From some wild nation far beyond the rim
Of the blue waters she did lightly skim.
He watched her near the river's winding strand,
And new-born hope a-lit his spirit dim ;
His courage rose, by sorrow long unmanned,
And freedom's rising star his kindling vision scanned.

134

But while he gazed upon the veering bark,
A gong, deep-sounding, rolled its clanging peal,
Signalling death ; and troops of warriors dark,
In rude array across the plateau wheel,
And spear-heads flash a glittering sea of steel.
The issue speeds : the captive's dream is o'er—
His fleshly essence soon will cease to feel,
His spirit seek that dread, that shadowy shore,
Which soul in mortal casket never can explore.

135

Again the tocsin rings : the hour is come—
A swarthy band his dismal prison thread ;
Pensive he turns, all sense, all feeling numb,
As one in somnolescent stupor led
To the oblivious regions of the dead.
He moves supine, opprest with brazen chains,
And halts beneath a wide o'er-arching shed—
The place of death ; here, while deep silence reigns,
Awaits the stroke that ends all struggles and all pains.

136

But ere it falls, a deep alarming sound
Rolls from the river, and with dire surprise
Awakes the crowd in sullen stupor bound.
Black Hossein starts, rage flashes in his eyes—
He waves his hand, awhile foregoes the prize,
Intent to learn ere he the Jower slays
Why o'er the land this note unseemly flies ;
And as the deadly blow he grimly stays,
Before his lofty throne a Dyak prostrate lies lays.

137

Dark news he brought, by yonder prahu borne,
Whose leila fired of woeful tidings told—
Tidings which many a bosom caused to mourn,
As from his gasping lips they slowly rolled.
A tale of rage, of blood, he did unfold :
How the false raja of Sooloo arose—
Bribed, so avouched, by Celebezian gold—
And branding all the Dyaks as his foes,
At midnight's hour they fell beneath the assassin's blows.

138

A few escaped, and in a prahu bent
Their rapid course across the adjacent main,
That Hossein might the rebel circumvent,
And claiming vengeance for his people slain,
The tyrant crush and his lost power regain.
The raja heard : he stroked his snowy beard,
And swore by Allah ere the moon should wane
That the curst isles, which once his vengeance feared,
Should feel his wrath till they a dreary waste appeared.

139

Should feel his wrath till he the traitor crushed,
And headless in the tomb his minions lay :
Then rose in haste, while all the assembly hushed
In terror saw the chieftan stride away,
In dreams of blood his vengeance to allay.
Yet ere he went he gave a hasty sign,
And bade the sailor's execution stay
Till he could glut at ease his hate malign,
Or to some selfish end the hapless man assign.

140

Again enchained within his ghastly den,
Nat Zoan rests, still destined to exist,
Yet musing sadly on the future, when
The headsman's stroke his life-strands should untwist
And drop him into naught, here hardly missed.
Yet as he mused, a stealthy step he heard
Upon the floor—and rising up to list,
Hocampi saw, who bore from Hossein word
Of talismanic power, and with him thus conferred.

141

He pledged him life if he across the wave
Would guide the fleet for Sooloo's capture meant—
Those goodly islets from defection save,
And curb the rebel chieftain's bold intent,
Now with the flush of victory insolent.
This task performed his life should be his own,
But failing from him be immediate rent;
His answer now Hocampi must make known—
'Tis his to live or die, he must decide alone.

142

Nat Zoan heard : new tumults shook his breast,
And hope again in light auspicious shone
As he the dark emissary addrest :—
" Hocampi, to your mighty chief make known
These terms on which I serve, and these alone :
I will with steadfast zeal his fleet command,
And him as my illustrious master own,
If he will grant me fair Oloa's hand ;
Oloa must be mine—this is my sole demand."

143

Hocampi scowled : a vengeful man was he,
And like Nat Zoan loved the royal maid ;
" Thy terms are high," he muttered sneeringly,
And passing out no further speech essayed.
When he was gone the captive to his aid
All his philosophy, his courage drew,
To calm his fears, which through his bosom played,
And conjured horrors soon to burst anew—
For he such bold desire felt he would surely rue.

144

But soon the dusky Labuan re-appeared,
With darker wrath upon his lowering brow ;
From his keen eyes malignant hatred leered,
Though striving hard to be attempered now,
Since Hossein did with power his foe endow.
"I come," he said, "from our illustrious sire,
Who gracious will thy monstrous wish allow,
If thou the rebel isles wilt blast with fire,
And doom the traitorous chief in tortures to expire.

145

"This done the lovely maid thou shalt secure—
But first to Hossein bring the rebel's head,
Him of thy gallant prowess to assure—
To prove also his treacherous vassal dead ;
But shouldst thou fail or Pulo scape, instead
Of sweet Oloa's hand, the headsman's blade
Shall in the public square thy life-blood shed,
And thy torn relics, ignominious laid,
Shall gorge the vulture-flocks that haunt the desert glade."

146

Nat Zoan heard—then bade the wrathful man
This answer to his haughty lord convey :
" That he who had so many hazards ran,
Whom Fate had cast in so perplext a way,
Would not now from her thorny pathway stray—
But would in sooth to this compact agree,
And even death for the fair maid essay,
Since reft of her life was but misery."
This his reply whate'er the end ordained might be.

147

Hocampi frowned and hastily withdrew,
While jealous hatred in his bosom boiled,
And muttering vowed his pale-faced foe should rue
His cherished love when in the fight embroiled,
Or failing this by crafty art be foiled ;
For he was one who ne'er a wound forgot,
But steadfast round it all his venom coiled,
And nerved his spirit vengeance deep to plot
And with a heavier pang the cankering injury blot.

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148

But serpent-like his thoughts in secret held,
And to his chief Nat Zoan's answer bore—
Who chafing heard, to frantic rage impelled,
And longing still to shed the captive's gore;
Yet conscious that he only could restore
The rebel isles to his despotic sway—
To staunch his anger for a while forebore,
And bade Hocampi ere the flush of day
Unto the council hall the hated Jower convey.

149

Nat Zoan went, and with the raja planned
The course of action he was soon to take;
Then sped to marshal the invading band,
Prepared by noon the river to forsake,
With thunder charged the rebel isles to shake.
The order given, away the squadron bears,
And Sipang's head at twilight doubling make—
Thence forward urged by light but favoring airs,
Stretch for the shoreless deep to quest the traitorous lairs.

150

Again afloat! Again upon the surge
Nat Zoan threads at large his briny home—
Free as the birds that round his fleet converge,
Free as the winds that drive the billowy foam—
He knows no lord, free as he lists to roam.
Light was his heart—no sorrow now he knew,
And bright his hopes as heaven's star-lit dome;
Love still his beacon-ray, still tried and true
He towered, the captain of an Illanoan crew.

151

'Twere long to tell the story of that flight—
That baffling passage o'er the treacherous main;
To paint the terrors of the deadly fight
That gave the isles to Hossein's rule again,
And fouled their sheen with many a gory stain.
'Twere long to tell—nor fits it to narrate
How fought the rebel Pulo—how half slain
He fell among the dead, assured his fate,
But Zoan stayed the blow with hand compassionate.

152

Flushed with success the victors homeward steer,
And bound in chains the traitor chieftain bear,
That Hossein may his vengeance launch severe
And smite the man who did his anger dare—
Ay, roused the tiger in his very lair.
Fared well the voyage ; they reach the river tide
And stretch for Kuchin on the margin there,
While as between the winding banks they glide
Loud cheers of welcome rise from throngs on either side.

153

But evening falls ere they the town attain,
And Hossein wearied lay in sleep opprest—
Nor audience from him could Nat Zoan gain,
Till day awaking roused him to unrest,
When he in solemn state could be addrest.
Hence on his ship the sailor still remained,
Slumbering betimes, though dreams his mind infest,
And horrors o'er each vision darkly reigned—
Or wakeful oft, his thoughts a flight perturbed maintained.

154

'Tis night's meridian hour, when locked in sleep
One-half the sphere in shadow lies imbound—
When shapes immortal mystic vigils keep,
And safely guide the wheeling planet round,
And to the mortal race in dreams expound
The secret laws of Fate. Now over all
Shade broods immense—nor rolls a jarring sound,
Save when the watchmen from their stations call,
Or bays some restless dog, linked to yon sea-girt wall.

155

Or when with elfin voices warbling low
The broken ripples murmur on the shore,
Or distant heard, the breakers hoarsely flow,
And in soul-saddening diapasons roar—
The coral-reef and quicksand foaming o'er ;
Or when in thicket hid, thy solemn note
Oh, Campanero ! doth the maze explore,
Like chime of bell in silvery tinklings float—
Oft have thy nightly peals mine ear with sadness smote.

156

Or when in spirit-whispers, heard afar,
The voice of night vibrates amid the gloom,
Or shattered falls in heaven some meteor star,
Whose dying flushes for a while illume,
Then sink in shade, such lustres certain doom ;
Or haply borne upon the sighing gale
The sea-bird's plaint, or bittern's hollow boom,
In mingled tones the wakeful ear assail,
And all in chorus joined with grief the soul enveil.

157

On such a night, rife with such ghostly sounds,
Nat Zoan in his cabin restless lay,
While thought beyond the reach of reason bounds
Into chaotic realms, cast away
Upon the rocks of Fancy—deadlier they
Than those on which the nautic bard was lost. (11)
Thus long he wrought, to feverish dreams a prey,
Till slumber calmed his spirits, tempest-tost,
And him enchained till dawn night's eastern barrier crost.

(11) See note.

158

And whilst his mind these dire chimeras held,
A lonely barge adown the river glides ;
By muffled oars and vigorous arms impelled,
Her pointed beak the sullen wave divides,
And soon beneath the prahu's stern she rides.
Then o'er the rail an agile figure springs,
And seeks the cell where Sooloo's chief abides ;
The lock unclasps, his fetters from him flings,
And him to subtly guise, a Quelpart mantle brings.

159

Then muttered "Haste,"—(aha ! that guttural tone,
That cat-like step the gaunt Hocampi mark.)
He leads the captive forth, and him alone
Seats in the stern-sheets of the little bark—
Then swiftly cleaves the winding river dark.
Soon in the gloom the barge is lost to view,
Still drifting down the silent Sarawak,
Till ocean spreads its boundless scope of blue—
Then moors as sunrise glares the lurid vapors through.

160

Hocampi lands, and with his trusty crew
The rebel chieftain hurries from the strand—
Fearful, lest roused, Nat Zoan should pursue,
And pour destruction on his faithful band,
And mar the scheme he had so deftly planned.
Hence far amid the wood, within a cave
That eye of man had rarely ever scanned,
They hid the chief, avouching him to save
If he secluded kept, nor sign of being gave.

161

Thus hid within the cave, in jungle dense,
They left him in concealment firmly bound,
With three bold Dyaks armed for his defense
Against the beasts that fiercely prowled around ;
Then back their devious course for Kuchin wound.
The deed was done : Hocampi's daring skill
His vengeful plot with deep success had crowned ;
Nat Zoan now his vow could not fulfil,
And him in frenzied wrath would blood-stained Hossein kill.

162

Oh, fell is he who nurseth deadly wrath,
Who darkly broods upon an injury—
Unceasing horrors dog his thistly path,
A joyless being he must ever be,
A prey to self-created misery.
And such a man Hocampi—evil bent,
Nat Zoan's unrelenting enemy,
By hopeless love with ruthless vengeance blent,
To madness urged, conspired upon his death intent.

163

Loud peals the gong—the tom-tom (12) hoarsely rolls,
And spear-tops glisten in the rising sun;
Chiefs proudly stalk, and lesser braves in shoals
To Hossein's palace haste to witness one,
A faithless Jower, meet due justice done.
There sat the raja on a jeweled throne,
And scowled on all with look the boldest shun—
For deadliest hate within his eyeballs shone,
And glared on him whose fault blood only could condone.

(12) See note.

164

And lo, beside the imperious chief, a maid
Of peerless beauty gazes wildly round ;
Loose her attire—no more in pomp arrayed,
She sadly droops, while fall her locks unbound—
Dark glistening locks, that trail along the ground.
At length her glance upon Nat Zoan falls,
And at that glance her sire in anger frowned—
For well it spoke of love that life enthralls :
Love fixed for aye, that naught of danger e'er appals.

165

As when great Wallace as a captive stood,
In godlike pride, before the sleuth-hound crew
Who loathed his genius, shamed that man so good
Should as a vivid being blast their view—
A hero matchless, as a patriot true :—
So mid the swarthy host, with hatred rife,
Who naught of mercy, naught of honor knew,
Nat Zoan stood, to answer with his life
The traitor Pulo's flight in the Sooloosian strife.

166

He to fierce Hossein tersely did relate
The prime events of his successful war :
How he the insurrection did abate,
And on the islets stamp the royal law ;
How he the rebel chieftain wounded saw
Among a heap of slain—and him enchained
In fetters huge and innocent of flaw,
A prisoner close, till yesternight remained ;
Whence he escaped, forsooth, was mystery unexplained.

167

He spoke : unquailing on the raja gazed,
Who stroked his snowy beard with nervous hand,
While vengeance in his eyes dilating blazed,
As he the sailor's steady features scanned
And secretly his murderous purpose planned.
Then hoarsely forth his broken accents rolled,
For frenzied rage his reason had unmanned :
"Oh, thou who hast so oft escaped our hold,
Who now our power dost mock with eye and visage bold—

168

"Know that at last thy villainy is sealed,
The due reward of all thy crimes is near;
Unless curst Pulo's lurking place revealed
Condones thy crime—thy punishment severe;
His lair avouch, and bid the dog appear."
Nat Zoan heard: "I know not where he bides,
Else had I brought him bound a captive here;
His flight was strange—all present search derides,
Though in the jungle near I deem he deftly hides.

169

"Nay more, oh, chief, I deem some recreant slave
Him from the prahu led to peril me—
As false to thee, whose mercy now I crave."
"Silence, thou cur! must thou still daring be?"
Outspoke the raja, chafing furiously.
"Ho guards, arise! your krisses draw and slay;
Bismillah! he doth utter heresy.
To arms! to arms! our mandate all obey—
Down with the white-faced Jower—him headless instant lay!"

170

Wild was the yell that from the throng arose,
And woman's voice was mingled with the strain,
As round the fated man the warriors close
And ceaseless strokes upon him fiercely rain,
Resolved he ne'er shall scape their lord again.
High in the air flashed many an ataghan,
Whose lustre many a gory clot did stain—
And darts and javelins, scarce a pigmy's span,
About the sailor glanced, and thus the fray began.

171

But he alert, his goodly kris outdrew,
And like a meteor waved it round his head ;
Then swift a pathway hewed his foemen through,
Bestrewn with heaps of dying and of dead,
Till back the living cowered in abject dread ;
Thence toward Oloa sprang, and her upbore
Amid the cowering throng, and swiftly sped
With his fair burden to the river shore—
Thence his fleet prahu gained, prepared the seas t' explore.

172

His men he calls—his men with cheers respond,
And to the sweeps with vigorous sinews bend—
And ere the foes pursue, a mile beyond
The uproused town the river they descend,
And toward the main their rapid flight extend.
But still astern careered the raja's crew
Till sunset, when the hopeless chase they end;
Then, as they turned, one shot Nat Zoan threw,
And charged with death into Hocampi's breast it flew.

END.

NOTES.

Note 1—Page 14.

"A Leila, long in peaceful age grown old."

Leila.—A brass cannon used by the Malays, usually carrying a two-pound shot, and mounted on the bows of the war prahus.

Note 2—Page 16.

"Their junk a Prahu suddenly assailed."

Prahu.—A Malay war-boat, built of timber at the lower part—at the upper of bamboo and kedgang, the dried leaf of the Nepa palm. Outside the bends is a narrow gallery, in which the rowers sit cross-legged. A cabin is formed in the after part for the Chief who commands. Over all the vessel runs a strong flat roof, on which the warriors fight—their arms being the kris and spear, both of which require elbow room. A piece of artillery called a leila is placed on the bows. Each prahu holds about eighty men—is swift, gaily painted, and frequently ornamented with feathers.

Note 3—Page 18.

"A jewelled Kris, which once as master claimed."

Kris.—A sword of the Malays, sinuous in shape, and sometimes poisoned. A Kris once possessed by a famous warrior is highly prized; hence the value of Hocampi's present to Nat Zoan. The handle of this weapon, wrought of wood, is also supposed to possess cabalistic powers, and such as are elaborate in character command fabulous prices.

Note 4—Page 27.

"Keeney Ballu, forever doomed to keep."

Keeney Ballu.—The highest mountain in Borneo, rising 14,000 feet above the level of the sea. It is remarkable for the numerous cascades which fall from its summit, where a lake exists, said by the Dyaks to be haunted by the shadows of the dead.

Notes 5 and 6—Page 31.

"Oh, for a hate such as Damiens bore."

Robert Francis Damiens.—A native of France, executed March 28, 1757, for attempting to assassinate the king.

"Such as Chastel with endless glory crowned."

John Chastel.—The son of a woolen-draper of Paris, who attempted to kill Henry IV of France, December 27, 1594. He and Damiens were put to death with horrid tortures.

Note 7—Page 33.

"Or scorn the turbaned Seer, whose law hath no appeal."

Mohammad.—No name has probably suffered more at the hands of transcribers than that of the founder of Islamism. It is written no less than forty different ways, its pronunciation being almost equally indefinitely established. The correct form is Mohammad—so written and pronounced on the authority of Senator Wm. J. Shaw, who during a lengthened sojourn among the Oriental nations, critically observed their manners customs, religious and social ceremonies, modes of expression, etc. The Senator also takes issue against the popular fallacy of the upas being a deadly plant. During his residence in Java he searchingly investigated its properties, and was convinced of their harmlessness. One strong proof of this is the cultivation of the plant, which, considered exceedingly ornamental, is found in almost every garden. The annihilation of this superstition will fall heavily on the imaginants who have been wont to consider the upas a symbol of extreme malignancy.

Note 8—Page 46.

"Then from his belt a Sum-pi-tan he drew."

Sum-pi-tan.—A reed through which a small dart is propelled by blowing. The dart is charged with poison, and the wound usually fatal. Though used chiefly to kill birds, it is often employed against larger game, the huge serpents of these fiery latitudes occasionally falling victims to its deadly attributes.

Note 9—Page 54.

"Thou the brave Jower of power invincible."

Jower.—This word, immortalized by Byron, signifies "infidel." It is usually written "Giaour," but as this mode is the cause of much mispronouncement, I have ventured to anglicize the word, conforming the orthography to the pronunciation.

Note 10—Page 71.

"Here in a cell, where heads from warriors cut."

Outside most Dyak villages there is a building raised on posts, circular in shape, pointed roofed, and pierced with port-holes. This is the Head-house, in which are suspended the heads of enemies killed in battle. These cerebral mementoes are usually painted in barbaric style—pieces of wood, colored to represent eyes, being inserted in the visual sockets, and gaudy-tinted tassels floating from the shrunken chins. The heads are swung from beams, the lines passing through the skulls and being long, allowing considerable vibration when the wind blows strongly through the port-holes.

Note 11—Page 89.

"Than those on which the nautic bard was lost."

Allusion is here made to Falconer, incontestably the greatest marine poet of the world. His untimely fate by shipwreck in the Mozambique channel was a fitting end to him whose muse had been cradled on the surge and nurtured in the tempest.

NOTE 12—PAGE 92.

"*Loud peals the gong—the tom-tom hoarsely rolls.*"

TOM-TOM.—A drum used by the people of the Malaysian Isles. The gong also employed is larger than the Chinese, and has a more sonorous sound.

ERRATUM.

In line ninth, verse 91, for "vision" read "visage."

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